

Message Text

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11

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /075 W
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R 120838Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9739

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 1427

PARIS FOR MELONE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, UV, ML

SUBJECT: MALIAN/UPPER VOLTAN BORDER CONFLICT

REF: OUAGADOUGOU 1358

1. ACCORDING TO DCM FRENCH EMBASSY, FORMIN ZERBO'S
ACCOUNT OF INCIDENT REPORTED IN REFTEL IS NOT EXACTLY
ACCURATE. FRENCH EMBASSY VERSION FOLLOWS:

A. ON JUNE 3, A PEUL (MEMBER OF ONE OF THE
INDIGENOUS TRIBAL GROUPS) CAME INTO THE VILLAGE
OF DARA AND GAVE VILLAGE CHIEF HAMADE A MESSAGE
THAT HE WAS NEEDED URGENTLY AT BATOU. THIS WAS
NOT OUT OF THE ORDINARY SINCE TRADITIONAL CHIEF
OF VILLAGES ALONG THE FRONTIER OFTEN HAVE BUSINESS
ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER. THE CHIEF HOWEVER WAS
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A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS, AND GATHERED A CONTINGENT OF

MEN FROM THE VILLAGE ARMED WITH SPEARS AND KNIVES
AND SET OUT IN A PEUGEOT PICK-UP.

B. ONCE OVER THE BORDER AND DEEP INTO MALIAN
TERRITORY, THE PEUL FIRED INTO THE AIR, AND A
CROUP OF SOLDIERS QUICKLY SURROUNDED THE GROUP AND
MADE THEM GET OUT OF THE TRUCK. SOMEHOW IN THE
CONFUSION, THE DRIVER OF THE TRUCK WAS ABLE TO GET
AWAY. HE CROSSED BACK INTO UPPER VOLTA AND WENT
DIRECTLY TO THE VILLAGE OF BAN AND REPORTED THE
INCIDENT TO THE COMMANDANT STATIONED THERE.

C. A VOLTAN PATROL SET OUT ON FOOT; CROSSED THE
BORDER AND ABOUT 0500 ON JUNE 4 HAD MADE THEIR
WAY TO THE VILLAGE OF OMO WHICH IS VERY CLOSE TO
BATOU. THERE, THEY DISCOVERED THAT THE LOCAL POPULATION
HAD EVACUATED THE VILLAGE, AND THAT MALIAN TROOPS
HAD COMPLETELY TAKEN OVER. THERE WAS A SKIRMISH
AND SOME RESULTANT DEATHS. ACTUAL NUMBERS ARE
UNKNOWN, HOWEVER THE FRENCH SAY THAT THERE WERE
LOSSES ON BOTH SIDES, WITH THE MALIANS SUFFERING
GREATER LOSSES, BECAUSE THEY WERE ASLEEP WHEN
SURPRISED BY THE VOLTAN ARMY.

D. THE VOLTANS BROUGHT BACK CLOTHING AND OTHER
EVIDENCE TO PROVE THAT THE MALIAN MILITARY ARE STILL
IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE AREA
DISGUISED AS CIVILIANS. THE VOLTANS ALSO CAPTURED
A QUANTITY OF SOVIET ARMS FROM THE MALIANS. THE
VOLTAN PATROL RETURNED WITHOUT THE VOLTAN CAPTIVES.

2. ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH, THE VOLTANS REALIZE THAT
THEY WERE IN THE WRONG IN CROSSING THE FRONTIER AND
PENETRATING MALIAN TERRITORY. IT IS FOR THIS
REASON THAT EMBELLISHMENTS APPEAR IN THE FORMIN'S
VERSION.

3. THE FRENCH DCM STATES, THAT RUMOR HAS IT, THAT
CHIEF HAMADE AND THE OTHER CAPTIVES WERE EXECUTED
PUBLICLY A COUPLE OF DAYS AFTER THE INCIDENT.
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HE SAYS THAT THE GOUV WANTS TO KEEP THIS QUIET IN
ORDER TO AVOID MASS HYSTERIA AND PRESSURE TO AVENGE
THEIR DEATHS.

COMMENT:

THE FRENCH VERSION IS CERTAINLY PLAUSIBLE. IT IS
MORE LIKELY THAT THE MALIANS WOULD ATTEMPT TO LURE
A VICTIM OVER THE BORDER RATHER THAN RISK

ACTUALLY CROSSING OVER AND ENTERING UPPER VOLTA
WHEN THERE WAS AN EASIER WAY TO ACCOMPLISH
THE SAME OBJECTIVE.

THERE HAS BEEN NO REPORT ON THE RADIO CONCERNING
THIS INCIDENT, AND THE NEWSPAPER REPORTS HAVE
CARRIED THE OFFICIAL GOUV VERSION. THESE REPORTS
ALSO STRESS THE HOPE THAT THE VOLTANS PLACE IN THE
FINDING OF THE LOMEMEDIATION COMMISSION. IT IS
ALSO TRUE THAT PRESIDENT LAMIZANA HAS HIGH HOPES FOR
THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME OF THE COMMISSION'S DELIBERATIONS.
BOTH HE AND THE ARMY ARE RIDING HIGH ON THE OMO VICTORY
WHICH IN EFFECT HAS BEEN A KIND OF VINDICATION FOR
THE DECEMBER FIASCO. IT IS TO THE GOUV'S ADVANTAGE TO
MAINTAIN FIRM CONTROL OVER PUBLICIZING ANY INCIDENT
THAT WOULD EXCITE THE POPULACE AND LEAD THEM TO PRESS
FOR ACTION THAT COULD THREATEN THE EXPECTED RESULTS
OF THE MEDIATION COMMISSION. A DEFINITE LID HAS
BEEN PLACED ON VOLTAN OFFICIALS FROM DISCUSSING THIS
SITUATION. OTHER DIPLOMATS STATE THAT THEY ARE HAVING
THE SAME DIFFICULTY AS WE IN TRYING TO GET VOLTANS
WHO ARE NORMALLY QUITE FREE WITH INFORMATION TO COMMENT
ON THIS INCIDENT EXCEPT IN VERY VAGUE AND GENERAL
TERMS.
DUMAS

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